

Amendments to the Drawings:

The attached replacement drawing sheet makes changes to Fig. 71 and replaces the original sheet with Figs. 71.

Attachment: Replacement Sheet

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3–7, 9–20, 22–36 and 38–42 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1, 6, 9, 10, 11, 17, 22, 23, 27, 36 and 38–42 are amended and claims 2, 8, 21 and 37 are canceled. Also by this Amendment, paragraphs [0199], [0203], [0246] and [0361] and Figure 71 are amended.¹ Support for the amendments can be found, for example, in paragraphs [0235], [0236], [0275], [0362] and in the canceled claims. No new matter is added. Applicants request reconsideration and prompt allowance at least in view of the following remarks.

The Office Action objects to the disclosure and Figure 71 for containing several typographical errors and incorrect reference numbers. The amendments to the paragraphs recited above and the amendments to Figure 71 noted in the attached replacement sheet correct these errors. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the objections.

The Office Action objects to claims 1 and 10 for containing typographical errors. The amendments to claims 1 and 10 correct these typographical errors. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the objection.

The Office Action rejects claims 1–5, 12, 14, 37 and 40 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,764,098 (Matsumoto). The Office Action objects to claims 6–11, 13, 15–36, 38, 39, 41 and 42 as depending on a rejected base claim but notes these claims would be allowed if written in independent form.

Applicants amend original claim 1 by incorporating the features of claim 2 and the allowable features of claim 8 and cancel claims 2 and 8. Applicants amend claims 6, 10, 11 and 17 by incorporating the features of the base claim as well as any intervening claims.

¹ Paragraph numbers through this Amendment refer to the paragraph numbers in the application publication.

Based on the reasons for allowance of claims 6, 8, 10, 11 and 17, independent claims 1, 6, 10, 11 and 17 are in condition for allowance.

Additionally, Applicants respectfully assert that Matsumoto fails to disclose an energy-absorbing-load changing mechanism operable to change an impact energy absorbing load to be generated by deformation of the impact energy absorbing member 23, depending upon actual velocity of the movement of steering column 11 relative to the vehicle body, as recited in canceled claim 37. Matsumoto fails to disclose the above because the actual velocity of movement of the steering column 11 relative to the vehicle body is not determined depending solely upon whether the vehicle driver is fastened by the seat belt or not. Rather, the velocity is determined by other conditions such as the vehicle running speed and the weight of the vehicle driver. However, in the interests of expediting prosecution, Applicants amend claims 38 and 39 by incorporating the features of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Based on the amendments, Applicants respectfully assert that independent claims 1, 6, 10, 11, 17, 38 and 39 are patentable. Additionally, claims 3–5, 7, 9, 12–16, 20, 22–36 and 40–42 are patentable, at least in view of the patentability of the independent claims, from which these claims variously depend, as well as for the additional features they recite. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the above rejection.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1, 3–7, 9–20, 22–36 and 38–42 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,

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JAO:KRG/jnm

Attachment:

Replacement Sheet
Amendment Transmittal

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